

With Me In Paradise; Luke 23:39-43

I. Blaspheme

- A. Luke 23:39 (ESV); One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!”
- B. The Gospels spend a lot of time showing us the disdain which the leaders (and sometimes the people) had for Jesus
 - 1. Throughout the Gospels we read of the religious elite trying to trick (test) Jesus — to make him say something that will get Him in trouble with either Rome or the Sanhedrin
 - 2. John 8:3–6 (ESV); ³ The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst ⁴ they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” ⁶ This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.
 - 3. The narration of Jesus’ death (in all four Gospels) focuses on the mocking and disdain the crowd had for Him
 - a) The release of Barabbus (a seditionist) instead of Jesus
 - b) The mocking by the soldiers (a robe, scepter, and crown)
 - c) And even the mocking during his crucifixion by the rulers and soldiers
 - d) Luke 23:35–37 (ESV); ³⁵ And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!” ³⁶ The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine ³⁷ and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!”
- C. The criminal didn’t say, “if you are the Christ” — he asked, “aren’t you the Christ?”
 - 1. The word that is translated ‘railed’ is to blaspheme — to make as nothing
 - 2. While acknowledging Jesus as Messiah he denied His power to save
 - 3. That is interesting considering that Jesus’ whole mission was to save
- D. We see this kind of behavior a lot in our society
- E. But the other criminal had a different take on Jesus’ crucifixion

II. Condemnation

- A. Luke 23:40–41 (ESV); ⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.”
- B. Justly condemned
 - 1. The others crucified with Christ were criminals and their sentence was being carried out
 - 2. He recognized his guilt and accepted his sentence
 - 3. It almost seems as if he is concerned for Jesus — “this man has done nothing wrong”
 - 4. He recognizes that Jesus does not deserve this treatment — the sentence of crucifixion or the mocking
- C. Just like the criminals, we are justly condemned — we deserve death
 - 1. Romans 3:23 (ESV); for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
 - 2. Romans 6:20–23 (ESV); ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- D. You can be a good person and also be justly condemned

1. Sin — an offense against religious or moral law; transgression of the law of God ¹
 2. Literally, to miss the mark
 3. You can be a good person and miss the mark; lying, gluttony, unbelief
 4. God ended the Israelite nation in 70 AD for their unbelief
 5. Luke 19:41–44 (ESV); ⁴¹ And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, ⁴² saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side ⁴⁴ and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”
- E. The sooner we recognize that we are justly condemned the sooner we run to the only one who provides salvation!
- III. With Me
- A. Luke 23:42–43 (ESV); ⁴² And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” ⁴³ And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”
 - B. Let’s look at the criminal’s salvation (Coffman)
 1. “He believed on the Lord at a time when even his staunchest disciples had forsaken him and fled.
 2. He believed on him and confessed him as "Lord" while others were reviling him.
 3. He made that amazing confession when he himself was in an agony of nakedness, suffering, death, and humiliation. Can anyone fail to see the difference in his confession, under those circumstances, and the ordinary profession of faith today, when one is all dressed up in his Sunday best and encouraged by a whole church singing and praying to urge him forward?
 4. The robber confessed Christ in the presence of Christ's bitterest foes in the exact moment of their triumph, those foes being none other than the leaders and most influential men in all Israel.
 5. He confessed Christ in the moment of Christ's deepest humiliation, but those who confess today do so with the concurrent testimony of nineteen centuries affirming his glorification!
 6. The robber gave evidence that he indeed had seen "God," by his humble acceptance of the horrible death by crucifixion as a "just" reward of his deeds.
 7. In the light of these and many other considerations, it must be clear that those who would either claim for themselves or extend to others the promise of salvation without obeying the gospel, using the salvation of that ancient robber as a basis for it, are not worthy to be named in the same breath with that robber.
 8. Where in the history of the world was there ever a more daring exhibition of faith, or nobler confession made under more difficult circumstances than was his?” ²
 9. People look to the criminal on the cross to try to prove a theory that obedience to the Gospel is unnecessary.
 10. But they forget that Jesus’ death had not occurred yet
 11. Hebrews 9:16 (ESV); For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established.

¹ Inc Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

² Coffman, James Burton. "Commentary on Matthew 27:66". "Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament". <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/matthew-27.html>. Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999.

12. Jesus — the priest on His throne, a priest after the order of Melchizedek, the Holy One of Israel, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace — forgave the criminal's sins

C. We can also be in paradise!

D. When we obey the Gospel of Jesus!

IV. In Paradise

A. Jesus' statement to the criminal on the cross has one major implication for us

B. Jesus offers salvation to those that recognize their sinfulness and need for salvation

C. Paradise awaits those that obey the Gospel of Jesus